

# David Guziks' Commentary On 36 Zephaniah

### **Biblical Text - TEV (Good News Bible)**

**Zep 1:1** This is the message that the LORD gave to Zephaniah during the time that Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah. (Zephaniah was descended from King Hezekiah through Amariah, Gedaliah, and Cushi.)

### The Coming Judgment on Judah

- Zep 1:2 The LORD said, "I am going to destroy everything on earth,
- Zep 1:3 all human beings and animals, birds and fish. I will bring about the downfall of the wicked. I will destroy everyone, and no survivors will be left. I, the LORD, have spoken.
- Zep 1:4 "I will punish the people of Jerusalem and of all Judah. I will destroy the last trace of the worship of Baal there, and no one will even remember the pagan priests who serve him.
- Zep 1:5 I will destroy anyone who goes up on the roof and worships the sun, the moon, and the stars. I will also destroy those who worship me and swear loyalty to me, but then take oaths in the name of the god Molech.
- Zep 1:6 I will destroy those who have turned back and no longer follow me, those who do not come to me or ask me to guide them."

### The Day of the Lord Is Near

Zep 1:7 The day is near when the LORD will sit in judgment; so be silent in his presence. The LORD is preparing to sacrifice his people and has invited enemies to plunder Judah.

- Zep 1:8 "On that day of slaughter," says the LORD, "I will punish the officials, the king's sons, and all who practice foreign customs.
- Zep 1:9 I will punish all who worship like pagans and who steal and kill in order to fill their master's house with loot.
- Zep 1:10 "On that day," says the LORD, "you will hear the sound of crying at the Fish Gate in Jerusalem. You will hear wailing in the newer part of the city and a great crashing sound in the hills.
- Zep 1:11 Wail and cry when you hear this, you that live in the lower part of the city, because all the merchants will be dead!
- Zep 1:12 "At that time I will take a lamp and search Jerusalem. I will punish the people who are self-satisfied and confident, who say to themselves, 'The LORD never does anything, one way or the other.'
- Zep 1:13 Their wealth will be looted and their houses destroyed. They will never live in the houses they are building or drink wine from the vineyards they are planting."
- Zep 1:14 The great day of the LORD is near—very near and coming fast! That day will be bitter, for even the bravest soldiers will cry out in despair!
- Zep 1:15 It will be a day of fury, a day of trouble and distress, a day of ruin and destruction, a day of darkness and gloom, a black and cloudy day,
- Zep 1:16 a day filled with the sound of war trumpets and the battle cry of soldiers attacking fortified cities and high towers.
- Zep 1:17 The LORD says, "I will bring such disasters on the human race that everyone will grope about like someone blind. They have sinned against me, and now their blood will be poured out like water, and their dead bodies will lie rotting on the ground."

Zep 1:18 On the day when the LORD shows his fury, not even all their silver and gold will save them. The whole earth will be destroyed by the fire of his anger. He will put an end—a sudden end—to everyone who lives on earth.

### Zephaniah 1:1-18

# **Zephaniah 1 – Coming Judgment and the Reasons For It**

### A. God's promised judgment.

1. (1) Zephaniah: The man and his times.

The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

- a. The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah: This first verse of the prophecy of Zephaniah sets it apart from most other prophets, in that he told us both his time and his lineage. Zephaniah was an unusual prophet, in that he was of royal lineage, descending from the godly King **Hezekiah**.
  - i. The name **Zephaniah** means "Yahweh Hides" or "Yahweh Has Hidden." Zephaniah was almost certainly born during the long, wicked reign of Manasseh, whose reign began 55 years before the start of Josiah's reign. Zephaniah was probably hidden for his own protection.
- b. In the days of Josiah: Josiah was a godly, young king who brought great revival and reform to Judah but Josiah reigned for 10 years before he led his great revival. Zephaniah was likely written in the years before the revival, and God used this prophecy to bring and further revival.

- i. Since Zephaniah predicts the destruction of Nineveh (which happened in 612 B.C.) we know that his prophecy belongs to the first part of the reign of King Josiah.
- ii. The 12 Minor Prophets are divided into two groups: pre-exilic and post-exilic. The first 9 are *pre-exilic*, writing before the Babylonians conquered and exiled Judah. The last 3 are *post-exilic*, writing during and after the return of Israel from Babylon to the Promised Land. Zephaniah is the last of the pre-exilic prophets, and can be said to "sum up" the messages of the previous 8. This is why Zephaniah seems unoriginal to some scholars, because he quotes the words and ideas of many previous prophets.
- 2. (2-3) The promise of judgment.

"I will utterly consume everything
From the face of the land,"
Says the LORD;
"I will consume man and beast;
I will consume the birds of the heavens,
The fish of the sea,
And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked.
I will cut off man from the face of the land,"
Says the LORD.

- a. **I will utterly consume everything**: Zephaniah didn't waste any time getting to the point. Delivering the message of the LORD, he warned of harsh and complete judgment that would consume everything before the LORD.
- 3. (4-6) Judgment is promised to idolaters.

"I will stretch out My hand against Judah, And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, The names of the idolatrous priests with the *pagan* priests-

Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops;

Those who worship and swear *oaths* by the LORD, But who *also* swear by Milcom;

Those who have turned back from *following* the LORD,

And have not sought the LORD, nor inquired of Him."

- a. **Against Judah**: The promise of judgment in Zep 1:2-3 was broad enough to include the whole earth, and to allow some to think that God didn't really mean them. Now God focused in on His people in the land of **Judah**, and He would not allow them to think that He spoke just to others.
- b. **I will cut off every trace of Baal**: King Josiah inherited a corrupt nation from his father Amon and grandfather Manasseh, a nation almost wholly given over to idolatry (2Ki 21:3-7). Here God announced judgment against the idol worshippers in Israel. Apparently both the leadership and the people heeded this announcement of judgment, because in the days of Josiah this kind of gross idolatry was put away (2Ki 23:4-15).
  - i. In light of the complete uprooting of idolatry described in 2 Kings 23, we can see that God's promise to **cut off every trace of Baal** and destroy the rest of the expressions of idolatry was fulfilled. We also see that this prophecy was an invitation, as if God said: "Baal and the idols are going to go. You can get rid of them in righteousness or I will get rid of them in judgment, but rest assured that they are going to go." King Josiah directed the war on idolatry and the nation was blessed.
- 4. (7-9) Judgment is promised to royalty.

"Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD;
For the day of the LORD is at hand,
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice;
He has invited His guests.
And it shall be,
In the day of the LORD's sacrifice,
That I will punish the princes and the king's children,
And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.
In the same day I will punish
All those who leap over the threshold,
Who fill their masters' houses with violence and
deceit."

- a. **Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD**: God addresses the royalty of Judah in a way they aren't used to hearing. He tells them to "shut up" and listen to His pronouncement of judgment a **sacrifice** of judgment made against a wicked nation.
  - i. Boice tells the story of two gangsters, one named "Two-Gun Crowley" who cruelly murdered many including a policeman. He was captured in a shoot-out with police and wrote this note during the shoot-out, fearing he would die: "Under my coat is a weary heart, but a kind one one that would do nobody any harm." The other gangster is Al Capone, who said: "I have spent the best years of my life giving people the lighter pleasures, and all I get is abuse, the existence of a hunted man." Our ability to proclaim our innocence when we are deep in sin is pretty amazing, but through it all God tells us **be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD**.
- b. **I will punish the princes and the king's children**: This warning came to a *godly* king during a time of reform. God warns Josiah and the whole royal

community what will happen if they don't follow through on their turning to God.

- c. All such as are clothed with foreign apparel: The priests and leaders of Judah were ashamed of their national identity, so they loved to dress in **foreign** apparel. They wanted to be as much like the worldly nations around them as they could possibly be.
- d. **All those who leap over the threshold**: This probably refers to bringing pagan customs and superstitions into the house of God, in the same way that the worshippers of Dagon honored silly and offensive superstitions (<u>1Sa 5:5</u>).
- 5. (10-11) Judgment is promised to merchants.
- "And there shall be on that day," says the LORD,
  "The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate,
  A wailing from the Second Quarter,
  And a loud crashing from the hills.
  Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh!
  For all the merchant people are cut down;
  All those who handle money are cut off."
  - a. **All the merchant people are cut down**: Merchants and those with money trusted in their riches, and now God promises to cut down those steeped in that kind of idolatry. Col 3:5-6 shows this isn't just an Old Testament concept: Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth . . . covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.
- 6. (12-13) Judgment is promised to the complacent.

"And it shall come to pass at that time That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart,
'The LORD will not do good,
Nor will He do evil.'
Therefore their goods shall become booty,
And their houses a desolation;
They shall build houses, but not inhabit them;
They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine."

- a. **I will search Jerusalem with lamps**: No one will be able to hide against the judgment of God. It is coming, and even if God must get out the **lamps** or searchlights, He will find them.
  - i. "Unlike Diogenes, the pre-Christian Greek philosopher who was searching for an honest man, Yahweh in this context does not seek righteousness but sin to *punish* and eradicate." (Baker)
- b. **Punish the men who are settled in complacency**: The LORD promised judgment against those who felt that God was distant or detached from their lives, and have thus become complacent.
- c. The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil: Some people believe in God as a great "clockmaker" who created the universe, wound it up and then left it ticking without any further intervention from Him. Those who believe there is no God, or if He is He has nothing to do with man are terribly and tragically wrong.
  - i. Edward Gibbon in his book *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* described the attitude towards religion in the last days of the Roman Empire attitudes remarkably like our own today.
  - The people regarded all religions as equally true.
  - The philosophers regarded all religions as equally false.

• The politicians regarded all religions as equally useful.

### B. The description of judgment.

1. (14-16) The intensity of judgment.

The great day of the LORD is near;
It is near and hastens quickly.
The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter;
There the mighty men shall cry out.
That day is a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of devastation and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities
And against the high towers.

- a. The great day of the LORD is near: The term day of the LORD (used more than 25 times in the Bible) does not necessarily refer to one specific day; it speaks of "God's time." The idea is that now is the *day of man*, but the day of man will not last forever. One day, the Messiah will end the day of man and bring forth the day of the LORD.
- b. That day is a day of wrath: It is a day of wrath because man will not give up without a fight, and because mankind will receive the just penalty for his rebellion against the LORD. Zephaniah paints the picture powerfully with the repeated description, "a day of..."
  - i. **That day is a day of wrath**: "This passage is the Vulgate forms the first line of the medieval sequence *Dies irae*" (Walker).
- 2. (17-18) The certainty of judgment.

"I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the LORD; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse."
Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

- a. **I will... I shall**: God wants to make it plain and certain that He will judge a rebellious Judah. If they do not repent, there will be no holding back from the completion of His judgment.
- b. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them: Men trust in silver and gold, but it will do them no good on the day of God's deliverance.

### **Judgment on Judah's Enemies**

- **Zep 2:1** Shameless nation, come to your senses
- Zep 2:2 before you are driven away like chaff blown by the wind, before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day when he shows his fury.
- Zep 2:3 Turn to the LORD, all you humble people of the land, who obey his commands. Do what is right, and humble yourselves before the LORD. Perhaps you will escape punishment on the day when the LORD shows his anger.
- Zep 2:4 No one will be left in the city of Gaza. Ashkelon will be deserted. The people of Ashdod will be driven out in half a day, and the people of Ekron will be driven from their city.
- Zep 2:5 You Philistines are doomed, you people who live along the coast. The LORD has passed sentence on you. He will destroy you, and not one of you will be left.

- Zep 2:6 Your land by the sea will become open fields with shepherd's huts and sheep pens.
- Zep 2:7 The people of Judah who survive will occupy your land. They will pasture their flocks there and sleep in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will be with them and make them prosper again.
- Zep 2:8 The LORD Almighty says, "I have heard the people of Moab and Ammon insulting and taunting my people, and boasting that they would seize their land.
- Zep 2:9 As surely as I am the living LORD, the God of Israel, I swear that Moab and Ammon are going to be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. They will become a place of salt pits and everlasting ruin, overgrown with weeds. Those of my people who survive will plunder them and take their land."
- Zep 2:10 That is how the people of Moab and Ammon will be punished for their pride and arrogance and for insulting the people of the LORD Almighty.
- Zep 2:11 The LORD will terrify them. He will reduce the gods of the earth to nothing, and then every nation will worship him, each in its own land.
- Zep 2:12 The LORD will also put the people of Ethiopia to death.
- Zep 2:13 The LORD will use his power to destroy Assyria. He will make the city of Nineveh a deserted ruin, a waterless desert.
- Zep 2:14 It will be a place where flocks, herds, and animals of every kind will lie down. Owls will live among its ruins and hoot from the windows. Crows will caw on the doorsteps. The cedar wood of her buildings will be stripped away.
- Zep 2:15 That is what will happen to the city that is so proud of its own power and thinks it is safe. Its people think that their city is the greatest in the world. What a desolate

place it will become, a place where wild animals will rest! Everyone who passes by will shrink back in horror.

### Zephaniah 2:1-15

### Zephaniah 2 – Judgment Against the Nations

A. The last chance.

1. (1-2) Repent while there is still time.

Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, Before the decree is issued, Or the day passes like chaff, Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you!

- a. **Gather yourselves together**: The idea is gathering together in a solemn demonstration of national mourning and repentance.
- b. **Before the decree is issued**: All the announcement of judgment in the previous chapter is understood as a warning and as an invitation to repentance. The oftenunwritten theme behind most every prophecy of judgment is, "This is what will happen if you *do not repent*." Here the prophet pleads with the nation to repent **before** it is too late.
- c. **Before the day passes like chaff**: Here the prophet called for a sense of *urgency* in repentance. Each day **passes like chaff**, and there is nothing to show for the day if we neglect what is most important: getting right and staying right with God.
  - i. How easy it is to let the days pass **like chaff**, and never get right with God! Often the devil's most powerful lie isn't that there is no God, or no Bible, or no truth often his most powerful lie is that *there is no hurry*. Nevertheless, *today is the day of salvation*.

2. (3) The last chance.

Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden In the day of the LORD's anger.

- a. **Seek the LORD, all you meek**: Even the righteous must take heed to this warning. It would do them no good to say, "The LORD speaks to my wicked neighbor and not to me." At a critical moment of national danger, even the righteous must **seek the LORD**.
- b. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger: In more than one place, God promises to hide His righteous in the day of great judgment. This is especially relevant to the time of the Great Tribulation, when Jesus warned us to Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luk 21:36)

### B. Judgment against the nations.

1. (4-7) Judgment against the Philistines.

For Gaza shall be forsaken,
And Ashkelon desolate;
They shall drive out Ashdod at noonday,
And Ekron shall be uprooted.
Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast,
The nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the LORD is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines:
"I will destroy you;
So there shall be no inhabitant."
The seacoast shall be pastures,
With shelters for shepherds and folds for flocks.

The coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah;

They shall feed their flocks there;
In the houses of Ashkelon
They shall lie down at evening.
For the LORD their God will intervene for them,
And return their captives.

- a. For Gaza shall be forsaken: Judgment will come against an unrepentant Judah, but it will also come against the pagan nations neighboring Judah. God promises to destroy the cities of the Philistines and give their land as pasture for the remnant of the house of Judah.
- b. The nation of the Cherethites: The name Cherethites is "a reference to their early geographical links with Crete." (Baker)
- 2. (8-11) Judgment against the Moabites and Ammonites.

"I have heard the reproach of Moab, And the insults of the people of Ammon, With which they have reproached My people, And made arrogant threats against their borders. Therefore, as I live," Says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, And the people of Ammon like Gomorrah; Overrun with weeds and saltpits, And a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them." This they shall have for their pride, Because they have reproached and made arrogant threats Against the people of the LORD of hosts.

The LORD will be awesome to them,

For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth;

People shall worship Him,

Each one from his place,

Indeed all the shores of the nations.

- a. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the insults of the people of Ammon: First God looked to the west and saw the Philistines; then He looked to the east and saw the Moabites and the Ammonites. God promised to judge these peoples and bring them to perpetual desolation.
  - i. "The comparison of Moab and Ammon to Sodom and Gomorrah is not surprising in view of their origin: Moab and Ammon were the offspring of the incestuous relations of Lot's daughters with their drunk father after he fled the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah." (Walker)
- b. The LORD will be awesome to them, for He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; people shall worship Him: God would glorify Himself among the nations, and one way He would do it was to bring the idols of the nations low. All would see that their idols are vain and that the LORD alone is God.
- 3. (12) Judgment against Ethiopia.

"You Ethiopians also, You shall be slain by My sword."

- a. **You Ethiopians also**: Now God looked to the south, announcing judgment against the **Ethiopians**.
- 4. (13-15) Judgment against Assyria.

And He will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria, And make Nineveh a desolation, As dry as the wilderness.

The herds shall lie down in her midst, Every beast of the nation.

Both the pelican and the bittern

Shall lodge on the capitals of her pillars;

Their voice shall sing in the windows;

Desolation shall be at the threshold;

For He will lay bare the cedar work.

This is the rejoicing city

That dwelt securely,

That said in her heart,

"I am it, and there is none besides me."

How has she become a desolation,

A place for beasts to lie down!

Everyone who passes by her

Shall hiss and shake his fist.

- a. And He will stretch out His hand against the north: God completed the circle of judgment against Israel's neighbors by looking at **Assyria** and her capital city of **Nineveh**, which would be made a desolate city fit only for the habitation of animals and birds.
- b. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt securely: Nineveh felt strong and confident, but God knew how to bring her low. Here the LORD fulfilled the principle of <a href="Jas 4:6">Jas 4:6</a> : God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
  - i. Zephaniah never mentions why the nations were ripe for judgment. Perhaps he assumed we've already read Amos and Isaiah and Nahum, which described the sins of these neighboring nations.

### **Judgment on Jerusalem and the Nations**

**Zep 3:1** Jerusalem is doomed, that corrupt, rebellious city that oppresses its own people.

- Zep 3:2 It has not listened to the LORD or accepted his discipline. It has not put its trust in the LORD or asked for his help.
- Zep 3:3 Its officials are like roaring lions; its judges are like hungry wolves, too greedy to leave a bone until morning.
- Zep 3:4 The prophets are irresponsible and treacherous; the priests defile what is sacred, and twist the law of God to their own advantage.
- Zep 3:5 But the LORD is still in the city; he does what is right and never what is wrong. Every morning without fail, he brings justice to his people. And yet the unrighteous people there keep on doing wrong and are not ashamed.
- Zep 3:6 The LORD says, "I have wiped out whole nations; I have destroyed their cities and left their walls and towers in ruins. The cities are deserted; the streets are empty—no one is left.
- Zep 3:7 I thought that then my people would have reverence for me and accept my discipline, that they would never forget the lesson I taught them. But soon they were behaving as badly as ever.
- Zep 3:8 "Just wait," the LORD says. "Wait for the day when I rise to accuse the nations. I have made up my mind to gather nations and kingdoms in order to let them feel the force of my anger. The whole earth will be destroyed by the fire of my fury.

#### The Conversion of the Nations

- Zep 3:9 "Then I will change the people of the nations, and they will pray to me alone and not to other gods. They will all obey me.
- Zep 3:10 Even from distant Ethiopia my scattered people will bring offerings to me.
- Zep 3:11 At that time you, my people, will no longer need to be ashamed that you rebelled against me. I will remove

- everyone who is proud and arrogant, and you will never again rebel against me on my sacred hill.
- Zep 3:12 I will leave there a humble and lowly people, who will come to me for help.
- Zep 3:13 The people of Israel who survive will do no wrong to anyone, tell no lies, nor try to deceive. They will be prosperous and secure, afraid of no one."

### **Israel's Joy and Restoration**

- Zep 3:14 Sing and shout for joy, people of Israel! Rejoice with all your heart, Jerusalem!
- Zep 3:15 The LORD has stopped your punishment; he has removed all your enemies. The LORD, the king of Israel, is with you; there is no reason now to be afraid.
- Zep 3:16 The time is coming when they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not be afraid, city of Zion! Do not let your hands hang limp!
- Zep 3:17 The LORD your God is with you; his power gives you victory. The LORD will take delight in you, and in his love he will give you new life. He will sing and be joyful over you,
- Zep 3:18 as joyful as people at a festival." The LORD says, "I have ended the threat of doom and taken away your disgrace.
- Zep 3:19 The time is coming! I will punish your oppressors; I will rescue all the lame and bring the exiles home. I will turn their shame to honor, and all the world will praise them.
- Zep 3:20 The time is coming! I will bring your scattered people home; I will make you famous throughout the world and make you prosperous once again." The LORD has spoken.

### Zephaniah 3:1-20

# Zephaniah 3 – The LORD Rejoices Over the Restoration of His People

## A. A contrast between a wicked city and a righteous God.

1. (1-4) Jerusalem, the wicked city.

Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted,
To the oppressing city!
She has not obeyed His voice,
She has not received correction;
She has not trusted in the LORD,
She has not drawn near to her God.
Her princes in her midst are roaring lions;
Her judges are evening wolves
That leave not a bone till morning.
Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people;
Her priests have polluted the sanctuary,
They have done violence to the law.

- a. Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city! From the way that Zephaniah 2 ended we perhaps hoped that this oppressing city was Nineveh. From the references to her prophets, her priests, and the sanctuary and the law, we learn that Jerusalem was the oppressing city.
- b. She has not... she has not... she has not... she has not: In repeating these four phrases, the prophet told us the root of Jerusalem's sin.
  - i. **She has not obeyed His voice**: God called to His people, but they did not listen. If there is any voice for the sheep to obey, it is the voice of the shepherd but **she has not obeyed His voice**.
  - ii. **She has not received correction**: Correction certainly came, but she did not *receive* it as correction from the LORD. Instead it was a bad time, tough

circumstances, whatever – but **she has not** received correction.

- iii. She has not trusted in the LORD: God never gave her a reason to stop trusting in Him; He never proved Himself unfaithful or untrustworthy. Now God's people will openly deny and contradict God's word and promises, showing that she has not trusted in the LORD.
- iv. **She has not drawn near to her God**: The worst offence was saved for last. God longed for relationship with His people, but they rejected His desire and went their own way, so **she has not drawn near to her God**.
- 2. (5-7) The righteous God.

The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame. "I have cut off nations, Their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, With none passing by. Their cities are destroyed: There is no one, no inhabitant. I said, 'Surely you will fear Me, You will receive instruction'-So that her dwelling would not be cut off, Despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds."

a. **The LORD is righteous in her midst**: This made the unrighteousness of His people even more criminal and tragic. God had been nothing but **righteous** to them, yet they respond with sin. Eventually they put

themselves on the wrong side of God's righteousness and face His **justice**.

b. Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction... But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds: God brought His justice to the nations around Judah, and it should have warned Judah what would happen if they rejected God. Instead of learning from the surrounding nations, they dedicated themselves to ungodliness all the more.

#### B. The promise of restoration.

1. (8-13) Judgment and restoration.

"Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger: All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy. For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering. In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me;

In which you transgress against Me;
For then I will take away from your midst
Those who rejoice in your pride,
And you shall no longer be haughty
In My holy mountain.
I will leave in your midst

A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies,

Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down, And no one shall make *them* afraid."

- a. **Pour on them My indignation... then I will restore**: In light of the repeated and chronic sin of the nations and of God's own people, God would bring judgment and then bring *restoration*.
- b. That they all may call on the name of the LORD: In this ultimate restoration, God would give the world a common language again (a pure language), and the entire world will worship the LORD, not only Israel.
  - i. Most Bible scholars see this as fulfilled in the days of the Millennium, when Jesus reigns for 1,000 years over this earth after His return in power and glory. From this passage many scholars believe that in that day the world will go back to a common language perhaps Hebrew.
- c. **To serve Him with one accord**: Literally, this is *with one shoulder*. The idea is that the shoulders are working together as one to bear the load of the work.
- d. You shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain: In the millennial earth Israel will be the world's superpower, but she will not be proud or haughty. Under the leadership of the Lord Jesus and His redeemed, she will know that her standing is all of grace.
- e. For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid: This speaks of the peace and prosperity Israel will know in the millennial earth.

2. (14-20) Restored with singing.

Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, Is in your midst: You shall see disaster no more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear: Zion, let not your hands be weak. The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." "I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, Who are among you, To whom its reproach is a burden. Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, And gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame In every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will bring you back, Even at the time I gather you; For I will give you fame and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I return your captives before your eyes," Says the LORD.

- a. **Sing, O daughter of Zion!** In light of the glorious promise of restoration, Israel should sing and shout with joy. God will save and redeem them from both their enemies and their iniquities.
- b. The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save: This passage gives us definite steps for consolation, as we understand that:
- The LORD is in your midst.
- The LORD is in your midst with power to save.
- God takes joy in you.
- God gives you rest in His love.
- God sings over you.
- c. **He will rejoice over you with gladness**: We often underestimate the joy God has in His people, and too often think God is annoyed or irritated with us.
  - i. "Faulty as the church is, the Lord rejoices in her. While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope; for God does not sorrow, his heart is glad, and he is said to rejoice with joy a highly emphatic expression." (Spurgeon)
- d. **He will rejoice over you with singing**: We don't often think of God singing, but He does and He sings **over** His people. This is how much joy and delight we give to the LORD that He breaks into song!
  - i. "Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song: Father, Son and Holy Ghost together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which he bears to his people that he breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy." (Spurgeon)

- ii. "If God sings, shall not we sing? He did not sing when he made the world. No; he looked upon it, and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy: creation was very wonderful to them, but it was not much to God, who could have made thousands of worlds by his mere will. Creation could not make him sing... When all was done, and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of his redeemed, then he rejoiced after a divine manner." (Spurgeon)
- e. Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak:
  Knowing this is the tender love and care of God for us should make us respond two ways. First, we do not fear if the Mighty One loves us and delights in us this way, what can we be afraid of? Second, we let not your hands be weak knowing this mighty Lord of Love is for us, we want to be for *Him* with all of our energy. We will not become weak or weary in our service for Him.
  - i. "Fear thou not.' What! Not a little? No, 'Fear thou not.' But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, 'Fear thou not.' Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief. 'Fear thou not': neither this day, nor any day of thy life. When fear comes in, drive it away; give it no space. If God rests in his love, and if God sings, what canst thou have to do with fear?" (Spurgeon)
- f. I will gather... I will save: God promised to encourage the discouraged, to defeat our enemies, to heal the lame, and to gather the scattered. All this is for His praise and fame and for ours, because we are found in Him (I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples).